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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to investigate the interactive effectiveness of young missionaries of the Church of Latter-day Saints among Chinese in Taiwan. The study hypothesized that aliens will not demonstrate more sensitivity to the host culture, as measured by their reactions to cultural questions, as they spend more time in the culture, or that sensitivity is not related to contact. The basic data for the study was provided by a sampling of 40 Chinese in Taiwan who sorted a Q-deck of 71 cultural statements according to their "rightness" or "wrongness" in the view of the respondent. Mean scores were obtained against which missionary scores were compared. It was concluded from the results that missionaries will not adjust better to their new culture as they spend more time in it. Different missionaries may become aware of widely different behavior norms while never becoming aware of others. (TS)

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CONTACT AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITY: A LIMITED EXERCISE IN ATTEMPTING TO IDENTIFY PREDICTORS

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CONTACT AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITY: A LIMITED EXERCISE IN ATTEMPTING TO IDENTIFY PREDICTORS

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Enough results are currently available to demonstrate that, both generally and specifically, individuals finding it necessary to operate in an alien culture have problems in communicating within the context of that culture.[1]

Most obviously, such problems exist because different sets of "rules" govern behaviors in each culture and, though there may be some overlap, there are vast areas of exclusivity between each culture and, in many cases, respective cultural rules are in direct and irreconcilable conflict.[2]

An alien's sojourn is facilitated, Schattner suggests, in cases in which the alien's behavior creates confusion or uncertainty in the mind of the host receiver. The host then will indicate that uncertainty by emitting some confusion cues to alert the miscommunicating or misbehaving alien.[3]

However, Barney and Chu found, as did Barney and Smith, that even if the cues are there, aliens in a culture[4] obviously respond only in a limited way to them. In both studies above it was found that aliens, after two years in the culture, had failed to develop awareness of a substantial number of cultural expectations of the indigenous peoples. The assumption, then, would be that such failures lead to cultural errors that dilute the message of the alien attempting to communicate in the culture.

Perhaps it would be valuable here to suggest that different aliens need different degrees of functional capability in a foreign culture. Casual travelers (tourists) have little need for communicative skills, since they become the target of indigenous "sellers" (ie, the tourist is a "buyer", in many senses of the word, in a buyers market). In a reversed position is a missionary (for the purposes of this study) or a businessman. Each of these

finds himself a "seller" (either of messages or products) in a buyers market. In such a position, the missionary finds his success depends on his ability to function credibly within the culture. A tourist, on the other hand, is able generally to rely on a great deal more tolerance and, because of this unique position, would usually find it difficult not to function credibly in the new culture, given his minimum demands and his esteemed position as a buyer.

Thus, the missionary must accept a rather staggering burden of learning the language of the culture, and of learning of the culture itself. A tourist may find that goodwill and a minimum of acceptable cultural behavior will cause him to "flourish" in the strange culture, while a missionary or businessman must accept a challenge to learn rules that indigenous peoples themselves may not even be aware they are following.[4]

Because of the obvious need, language has long been taken for granted as a necessity for effective functioning by most people and institutions, but cultural knowledge has generally been left to a more haphazard process. Data collected over the past few years, however, would suggest that culture is at least as important as language for an alien, and Triandis suggests that "the degree of training required to avoid cross-cultural misunderstanding may be greater than required to master a foreign language."[5]

The logic which seemingly underlies the language-but-no-cultural-training pholosophy is that if a person has language training that will allow him to function immediately in the society on a minimum level, his observations will provide him with the cues and information he needs to make adequate cultural adjustments.

Such a logic suggests that contact increases understanding and assumes that aliens will be sensitive to the needs and expectations of those in whose culture they find themselves working.

Triandis and others have shown this may not be so, in terms of the stereotypes that aliens developed regarding their host culture (Americans in Greece, in this case).[6]

On a more specific level, the present study suggests that, perhaps, because of a cultural arrogance that is bred into virtually every culture (Brown, p.3), the wayfarer in another culture has extremely limited sensitivity to the demands of the second culture.[7]

Based on Triandis' findings, it is hypothesized here that aliens will not demonstrate more sensitivity to the host culture, as measured by reactions to cultural questions, as they spend more time in the culture, or that sensitivity is not related to contact.

A further area of exploration suggests that relative universality and correctness of response by the aliens might indicate areas in which detectable cues are given by host peoples.

For the purpose of this study, two sample groups were selected to perform Q sort[8] procedures on sets of cultural statements. The study is basically designed to probe some aspects of the interactive effectiveness of young missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon) among Chinese in Taiwan.

The LDS Church engages in an extensive proselyting program in which thousands of young men and women, usually 19 or 20 years of age, are sent for two years, at their own expense, to preach their Gospel and attempt to win converts to the Church. Each missionary is assigned to a single Mission jurisdiction (usually encompassing one "cultural area") for a 24 month period.

The missionaries of the sample had been given a two-month instructional period in the language they were to work in before they had been sent to Taiwan, but only casual cultural instructions dealing with surface behavior.

Typically, the missionary does not have more that a few weeks prior knowledge of his eventual mission assignment, and seldom is sent to his "preferred" area. Therefore, he has almost no other chance to become specifically acquainted with the culture of the area in which he is to spend his two years.

Thus, the missionary does not become a "student" of the culture, as would missionaries of other faiths. Other missionaries often are able to select the areas of their preference, and thus may prepare more extensively for the assignment. They may be more motivated, too, because they know they will be spending a prolonged period of time in the culture. The LDS missionary, on the contrary, spends a relatively short two years in the mission field, then returns home to take up the normal patterns of his personal life. Thus, he is merely a fairly casual observer of the culture who, it must be assumed, has some motivation for trying to understand enough of the culture to enable him to meet his main obligation--proselyting, but who has not made a permanent, or semipermanent, commitment to the culture.

The hypothesis above, then, proposes that missionaries in such a relative casual situation will not generally be motivated to be sensitive to more subtle cultural expectations of their cultural hosts. Concomitantly, the degree to which they fail to detect the differences between their delivery and the Chinese' espectations may be viewed as a mark of the degree to which they will fail to be able to operate effectively as "sellers" in a market in which the "buyers" have made the rules.

Barney and Chu found that, in an earlier study of returned missionaries, the missionaries disagreed with the Chinese significantly in 41.4 per cent of the statements that were placed before both groups. Similar findings were reported by Barney and Smith from a study conducted among returned missionaries from Mexico and a sample of Mexican respondents.

The study reported on in this paper takes an additional step to see whether missionaries who had been in the field of their endeavors for two years were any more attuned to Chinese expectations than were missionaries who had been in the mission field for six months or less.

A further subjective analysis explores some areas in which the missionaries demonstrated a sufficiently high unity in their responses that it might be supposed they had been sensitive to cues from the Chinese. This procedure should provide an indicator of the types of cultural behaviors in the Chinese culture an alien might be made aware of because he has a visible norm to observe.

METHODOLOGY--

The basic bench mark for the study was provided by a sampling of 40 Chinese in Taiwan who sorted a Q-deck of 71 cultural statements (provided in Chinese) according to their "rightness" or "wrongness" in the view of the respondent. By forcing distribution of the resulting sorted decks into a zero to 11 value scale, mean scores were obtained against which missionary scores were compared. Obviously, the bench mark mean scores provided by the Chinese sort provide the "right" or correct answer against which missionary deviations must be viewed as errors. The mathematical difference of the missionary mean score from the Chinese "correct" score must, then, be viewed as the degree of "error" of the missionaries.

The statements, many of which were picked up from Chu's earlier study, were selected because of their potential for being deceptively simple to the missionary when, in actuality, it was suspected there would be substantial difference between the missionary and the Chinese respondents.

To determine whether time-in-country has an effect on missionary perceptiveness, squared deviations from each respondent were collected for

the statements on which the missionaries and Chinese disagreed (to emphasize difference) and single variable analysis of variance was computed for squared deviation (again to emphasize differences) according to the time period the missionary indicated he had been in Taiwan (four time periods of 6 months each over two years).

Variance analyses using the time variance, as well as other independent variables filtered from demographic data should indicate whether a missionary's sensitivity might be inferred from his background, or from other surface characteristics.

RESULTS--

No effort is made here to analyze the responses of the Chinese respondents, except to indicate the composition of the respondent group. There are 23 males and 17 females represented in the group, with 72.5% falling in the Under-35-years age group. Further, 60% have educational experience beyond a high school education (though only 5% are university graduates) and 55% of the sample is from an urban background, 30% from rural areas and 15% from undetermined origins.

Such a sample composition would suggest a largely more liberal group than one in which the respondents are distributed normally by age groupings. Thus, the distribution here should provide a better look at a changing culture reflected by the youth rather than the more conservative traditional culture of the elders. In this frame, error should be in the direction of suggesting missionary - Chinese closeness, since it would be assumed changing cultural characteristics reflected by young Chinese will be in the direction of westernization. Thus, it is felt findings of differences are, if anything, conservative.

In the missionary group, 81.8% are either 19 or 20 years of age. Only one respondent is 22 or older. Further, 75.8% of the missionaries come from urban addresses (mostly in Utah, California and Arizona), and 63.7% have had some post-high school educational training (45.5% have one year of university work, one respondent is a vocational school graduate and 15.2% have two years of university experience). All but two respondents reported having been employed in some capacity with 54.5% of the respondents reporting having worked (full or parttime) one year or less. Of those who had worked, 39% were reported having spent the major part of their employment in "white collar" employment (heavy public contact, for present purposes), and 61% reported their major employment was in "blue collar" work (a minimum of public contact).

Most important for the purposes of this paper, 33.3% of the respondents reported having been in the mission field in each of the categories of "Up to 6 months" and "Six to Twelve Months". An additional 21.2% had been in Taiwan between 12 and 18 months and the remaining 12.1 per cent had been in Taiwan for more than 18 months.

Of the 71 cultural statements presented to each respondent for sorting into a rank order from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree (with a forced distribution procedure producing a quasinormal distribution on an eleven point scale), 32 statements yielded a significant disagreement (on two-tailed t-test at .05 level) between the Chinese and the missionaries. This finding generally tends to support the Barney-Chu results.

Because of this study's focus, the emphasis is on deviations between the missionaries and the Chinese, rather than on direction or specific points of deviation. In that context, the mean deviation across the 71 cultural statement variables is .969 (generally, on individual statements, a .950 deviation was sufficient to produce a t value significant at the .05 level), the standard deviation of the deviation is .690 and standard error .082.

Range of deviations is 2.941, with 2.943 (resulting from the statement that "The youth and vigor of young missionaries is a detriment to missionaries as they teach the Gospel to Chinese families.") the highest deviation and .002 (from the statement "Missionaries often stand too far away for good conversation when they are talking to someone.") the lowest deviation in the 71 statements.

Through introduction of a constant to eliminate negative signs on deviations (a negative deviation indicated the Chinese favored the statement more strongly than did the missionaries), deviations were obtained over the 32 statements on which significant differences existed and a squared deviation value was obtained for each missionary.

To test the basic hypothesis that there will not be a difference in acculturation over time, a one-way analysis of variance routine was used to determine whether cultural sensitivity differs according to the length of time the missionary has been in the culture.

(Insert Figure 1 Here)

Figure 1 shows the line produced across the four time-in-country categories by deviation means.

With the deviations returned from the square, Figure 1 suggests that, mathematically the missionary who has been in Taiwan 6 months to a year is the least sensitive to Chinese expectations, following a short period of some sensitivity. After one year, it would appear the missionary tends to develop some sensitivity and begins a trend line. Statistically, however, an analysis of variance produced (at 3 and 29 degrees of freedom) a 1.068 F value, which is not significant at the .05 level, warning that it is not reliable to conclude that such trends do, in fact, occur.

The failure to find significance makes it risky to do more than speculate on the possibility that a valid trend line exists.

Other variance analysis procedures were employed (employment experience X individual squared deviations and place of residence X individual squared deviations) with neither procedure producing a significant F value, suggesting further that sensitivity predictors are elusive.

Further, a variance analysis of the squared deviations and the responses of the missionaries to the question "How well do you think you do in communicating with the Chinese with whom you come in contact." produced no significant difference patterns.

As a measure of collective uncertainty within a sample, the standard deviation provides an indicator of variance around the mean. A look at the basic statistics produced by Chinese and missionaries on all 71 variables shows that Chinese had a mean standard deviation of 1.812, while the missionaries showed greater collective cultural confusion at 2.011 (the difference is significant, on t test, at .001 level). Standard deviations for the missionaries range from a low of 1.008 ("If a person will stay at least one step away from a person he is conversing with he will have better communication") to a high "collective confusion" standard deviation of 2.898 ("Natural Chinese courtesy often wastes missionary time because lessons are given when there is no interest and the contact does not want to be rude by saying no."). Both Chinese extreme standard deviation scores fall within the limits set by the two missionary extremes. The low Chinese S.D. score was 1.285 ("Often you must knock on the door several times and rather loudly in order to receive an answer."), and the high was 2.532 ("The lack of sophistication and the inexperience of young missionaries is a detriment to missionaries as they teach the Gospel to Chinese families.").

To obtain an additional view of the confidence with which the tw
sorted their statements, see Table I, which shows that Chinese respon
tended to have stronger feelings about the statements than did the mi
Chinese scores tended to

Insert Table I Here

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accumulat[illegible] the ends of the scale, while the missionary scores proc
a normal appearing curve, as shown in Figure 2.

Insert Figu.e 2 Here

Of the 17 variables (statements) on which the Chinese and the missi
showed significant (F ratio at the .05 level) differences in their co
"confusion level", the missionary group yielded the highest standard
(the highest confusion rate) on 13 (76.5% of all the statements) and
Chinese had a higher confusion rate on only 4 of the 17 (23.5%)

To test whether missionaries might be accepting "cues" and using
as they adjusted to cultural expectations, all 71 statements were dis
into three groups according to the degree to which the Chinese were u
in sorting the statements.

The three groupings are:

1. High Agreement, standard deviations to 1.709 (N=16)
2. Medium Agreement, standard deviation from 1.710 to 1.99
3. Low Agreement, standard deviation of 2.000 or higher (N

A single variable analysis of variance of the deviations by miss
from the Chinese means produced an F value of .978 (d.f. = 2, 29) whi
not allow for a statement of significant differences between the mean
produced by the two groups.

Mean deviations from the three groups however, did produce a mat
progression from high agreement to low agreement (High Agreement = -.

Medium Agreement = -.024, Low Agreement = .430), suggesting that missionary error increases according to the degree of disagreement according to the degree of disagreement among the Chinese over the "rightness" of statements.

CONCLUSIONS--

On the basis of findings, the hypothesis that missionaries will not adjust better to their new culture as they spend more time in it cannot be rejected. Findings show that, though no statistical significance may be attached, there are some mathematical differences over time that suggest slight adjustment.

Further, the hypothesis that Chinese might give clues on high agreement statements that allows missionaries a greater opportunity for adjustment must be rejected. This is so even though the mean deviations by missionaries do favor the high agreement statements.

Thus, it may be concluded from this study that an LDS missionary without formal cultural training does not develop significant cultural awareness over his two year stay in Taiwan. A high agreement rate among Chinese on certain cultural behaviors does not significantly assist the missionary in his development.

It would further be suspected, though no formal analysis was done, that there is little evidence of patterns of favorable behavior. Different missionaries may become aware of widely different behavior norms while never becoming aware of others. The missionaries had a much wider area of disagreement on virtually all the statements than did the Chinese.

Because of mathematical progression, that tends to support the thesis, though statistically not significant, further studies would be recommended to determine whether real differences might, in fact, be isolated.

FOOTNOTES

1. A number of studies have dealt with this general area. Among them are Barney, Ralph D. and Gary G. Y. Chu, "A Q-Sort Comparison Between Cultural Expectations of Chinese and Cultural Perceptions of Individuals Who Had Each Lived and Worked Among Chinese in Hong Kong or Taiwan for Two Years," a paper presented at the International Communications Association convention, April, 1974; Barney, Ralph D. and Calvin A. Smith, "A Q-Sort Comparison of Mexican and American Values," a paper presented in Speech Communication Association annual convention, December, 1974; and Triandis, Harry L., and others, The Analysis of Subjective Culture, (New York: John A. Wiley & Sons, 1972)

2. Elisabeth Schattner, Making it Abroad (Ormond Beach, Florida: USAF (TAC) Special Operations School, 1971), p. 79

3. Ibid., pp. 74-75

4. Gary G. Y. Chu, "Q-Sort Comparison Between Cultural Expectations of Chinese and Cultural Perceptions of Returned Latter-day Saint Missionaries from the United States Who Had Been Assigned to Chinese Missions" Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1973, pp. 2, 4

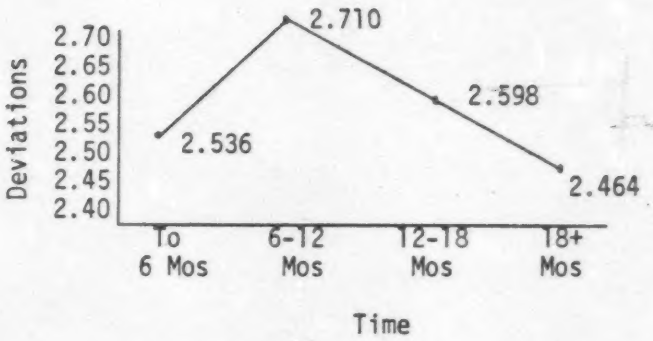
5. Triandis, op. cit., p. 115

6. Ibid., pp. 101-102

7. Henry Clay Smith, Sensitivity Training (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1973) pp. 3-4

8. William Stephenson, The Study of Behavior (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1953)

Figure 1



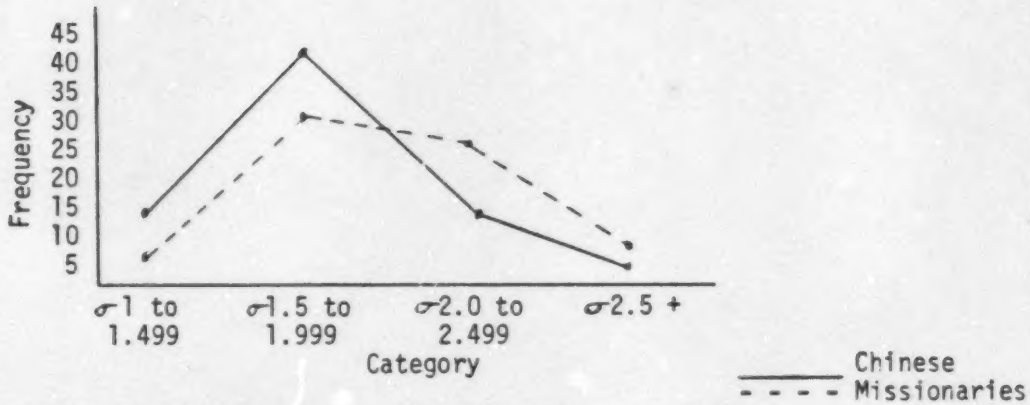
Mean Deviation Scores of Missionaries According To Time Spent in Taiwan

Table 1

Distribution of Standard Deviation on Culture Statements in Categories By Missionaries and By Chinese

Missionary \ Chinese	S. D. of 1 to 1.499	S. D. of 1.5 to 1.999	S. D. of 2.000 to 2.499	S. D. of 2.500 +	Tot
S.D. of 1 to 1.499	1	4	2	0	7
S.D. of 1.5 to 1.999	8	18	4	1	31
S.D. of 2.0 to 2.499	4	17	4	1	26
S.D. of 2.5 +	0	3	3	1	7
Tot	13	42	13	3	71

Figure 2



Comparative Distribution Curves of Missionaries and Chinese for Cultural Statements Across Four Categories of Standard Deviation